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ABSTRACT

This article presents a comprehensive transition model for mainstreaming children from early childhood special education into kindergarten. The SRA Model of Transition outlines transition practices to be implemented by the sending, receiving, and administrative staff. Suggestions for including parents throughout the process are offered. Transition practices are integrated into this model in order to prepare students for transition, facilitate the move itself, and provide for an appropriate follow-up. A suggested timeline emphasizes transition as a year-long process that involves a variety of practices that occur throughout the year. While this model was developed for movement from early childhood special education into kindergarten, it could easily be adapted for other transitions made by young students with special needs. A 42-item reference list is included. (Author/RH)

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SRA Transition Model:

Senders, Receivers, Administrators

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Running Head: SRA MODEL

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Abstract

This article presents a comprehensive transition model for moving children from early childhood special education into mainstream kindergarten - the SRA Model of Transition: Senders, Receivers, Administrators. This model outlines transition practices to be implemented by the sending, receiving, and administrative staff with suggestions for including parents throughout the process. Transition practices are integrated into this model to prepare students for transition, facilitate the move itself, and provide for an appropriate follow-up. A suggested timeline emphasizes transition as a year long process with a variety of practices occurring throughout the year. While this model was developed for movement from early childhood special education into kindergarten, it could easily be adapted for other transitions that occur for young students with special needs.

S R A Transition Model:
Senders, Receivers, Administrators

Professionals and parents who are concerned with the education of young children with disabilities are faced with the decisions of how to successfully move children from early childhood special education programs into mainstream kindergarten. Frequently students who are successful in early childhood special education move into kindergarten and experience a difficult adjustment which sometimes results in failure and a subsequent change in placement. The question to ask is: Could implementation of selected transition practices better prepare these children for this transition?

A review of the literature emphasizes the importance of transition planning and identifies major transition practices that should be implemented in order to adequately prepare students for transition, facilitate the move itself, and provide for an appropriate follow-up. Implementation of appropriate transition practices can increase each student's opportunity for success in the new environment (Fowler, 1982; Haines, Rosenkoetter, & Fowler, 1985; Vincent, Salisbury, Walter, Brown, Gruenewald, & Powers, 1980)

Blaska (1989) conducted a study to identify which transition practices were being routinely implemented by 22 school districts in Minnesota as children moved from early childhood special education into kindergarten. Forty-five practices had been identified in the literature and by an

expert panel as being important to incorporate into the transition process, yet, according to this study, only 49% (22 practices) of these practices were actually being implemented. Few districts had an organized plan for transition. The findings of this study were consistent with earlier findings in the literature (Hutinger & Swartz, 1980; Rocklage, 1980).

SRA Transition Model

The SRA Transition Model: Senders, Receivers, Administrators has been developed based on a review of the transition literature and on research findings regarding the transition from early childhood special education into kindergarten (Blaska, 1989). This model outlines the transition practices that should be included in a comprehensive transition process for moving children from early childhood special education programs into kindergarten. While this model was based on research regarding the transition from early childhood special education into kindergarten, with minor adaptations the model could be utilized for other early childhood transitions (i.e. nursery school to kindergarten; early childhood special education to nursery school). This transition model could be further adapted for use during other educational transitions (i.e. elementary to middle school).

The SRA Transition Model integrates essential transition practices from the literature, identifies the

staff who would be responsible for implementation, and provides a suggested timeline. In this model, the transition practices have been organized into three sections according to staff responsibility: sending teacher, receiving teacher, and administrator. There is no section exclusively for parents as this model embraces the philosophy that parent participation is needed and wanted throughout the entire transition process. This model also supports the philosophy that senders, receivers and administrators are all important players in the transition process. As Will (1984) indicated in his bridge analogy, in order to have a secure bridge upon which a child can move to the next program, the sending and receiving foundations must both be secure.

Sending Teacher. Sending teachers are responsible for the transition practices identified in Table 1. Environments and programs are very different when comparing early childhood special education and kindergarten (Fowler, 1982; Rosenkoetter & Fowler, 1986). Recognizing these differences, it seems apparent that sound preparation for moving children into kindergarten is necessary if they are going to have the best opportunity for a good adjustment and a successful experience. It is important that the sending teacher become familiar with the next environment, the program requirements, and the teacher expectations in order to be able to prepare students adequately (Fowler, 1982; Hutinger, 1981; Sanford & Mathers, 1988; Vincent et al.,

1980). Teachers can learn about the receiving environment by: a) visiting and conducting a structured observation in the fall (Fowler, 1982; Gerlock, 1985; Haines, et al., 1985), b) meeting with the receiving teacher, and c) utilizing appropriate on-going communication (i.e. telephone calls, informal contacts, meetings) (Fowler, 1982; Hutinger, 1981; Haines, et al., 1985). If it becomes impossible for a teacher to visit the next environment, the next best practice is to conduct an interview with the receiving teacher to acquire the necessary information (Sainto & Lyon, 1989).

Early childhood special education teachers should incorporate into the student's Individual Education Plan objectives which are appropriate for preparing the student for transition. Often teachers implement some of the transition practices identified in this model but fail to incorporate them into the child's IEP (Blaska, 1989).

There should be on-going communication with the parents about the transition process. Parents should be encouraged to be active participants throughout the entire process (Fowler, 1982; Haines, et al., 1985; Hanline, 1988).

When preparing children for transition, one method that has been successful is when teachers begin working toward the goal of transition from the first day of programming. Very gradually throughout the entire academic year, prerequisite skills are taught, changes are made within the preschool environment, procedures, and expectations, and by

spring the program has evolved into a class that looks similar to a receiving kindergarten in terms of expectations (Fowler, 1982; Forness, 1977; Haines, et al., 1985; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980; Maddox & Edgar, 1985). Using this process of gradually changing procedures and expectations, Fowler (1982) has emphasized, "The preschool preparations are not intended to turn the preschool into an early kindergarten, rather, much of the transition training can be accomplished in the context of typical preschool activities" (p. 321). This method would be the most effective in preparing children when the receiving kindergarten utilizes developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp, 1989).

When training the students for a successful transition into kindergarten, a number of other skills and behaviors have been identified as important for the sending teacher to incorporate into the early childhood program as the year progresses: a) reduction of teacher attention and reinforcement (Fowler, 1982), b) reduction of teacher prompts and cues (Fowler, 1982), c) introduces more group work as year progresses (Fowler, 1982), d) increases student's responsibility for self and belongings (Fowler, 1982), e) gradual change in procedures for in-class transition to be similar to next environment (Hutinger & Swartz, 1980; Rosenkoetter & Fowler, 1986), f) introduction of rules used in kindergarten (Carden-Smith & Fowler, 1983; Fowler, 1982; Haines, et al., 1985; Vincent, et al., 1980),

g) training for generalization of skills (Fowler, 1982; Haines, et al., 1985), and h) training in prerequisite skills which are most frequently referred to as survival skills (Cobb, 1972; Gerlock, 1985; Haines, et al., 1985; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980; Innocenti, Fiechtl, Rule, & Stowitschek, 1986; Lange, 1979; McCormick & Kwate, 1982; Rosenkoetter, 1990; Vincent et al., 1980).

The sending teacher needs to ommunicate with the receiving teacher in order to facilitate a smooth transition. There should be communication prior to placement of the student as will as follow-up communication. The receiving teacher should attend the student's staffing and be an active participant in planning the child's transition.

Some of these sending practices have not always been viewed as important to the transition process, however, these practices clearly prepare children for the next environment and without this preparation children will have a more difficult time with adjusting and feeling successful in the their new environment.

Insert Table 1 about here

Receiving Teacher. Receiving teachers need to be an integral part of the transition process in order for the

transition to be effective. Receiving teachers are responsible for the practices identified in Table 2. It is important that receiving teachers visit the early childhood special education or sending classroom in the spring in order to understand the sending teacher's expectations and observe teaching strategies that are effective. It is probably more appropriate to view classroom visiting as "exchange visitation" because it is equally important for sending and receiving teachers to take part in this practice (Fowler, 1982; Gerlock, 1985; Haines, et al., 1985; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980; Simon & Gillman, 1979).

The receiving teacher should attend the student's IEP conference where future placement and the transition are planned (Gerlock, 1985; Haines, et al., 1985; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980). This also gives the receiving teacher an opportunity to meet the student and parent(s) prior to placement into the receiving environment (Fowler, 1982; Hains, et al., 1985). The receiving teacher needs to become familiar with the student's handicapping condition and the educational implications (Gerlock, 1985). This allows the teacher to make necessary adaptations in teaching strategies, materials and to the environment. The receiving teacher can make accommodations in the kindergarten environment to facilitate the students' adjustment by using familiar materials, activities, and reinforcers (Fowler, 1982; Haines et al., 1985). Ongoing communication with the sending teacher and the parent(s) is important. Once the

student has moved into the receiving environment, follow-up communication should occur with the sending teacher (Gerlock, 1985; Haines, et al., 1985; Johnson, et. al., 1986; Sanford & Mathers, 1988). There are many practices that contribute to a successful transition and its necessary to understand the important role that the receiving teacher plays in this process.

Insert Table 2 about here

Administrator. Table 3 provides a listing of the practices to be implemented by the administrator. In order for transiton to occur smoothly, it must be well coordinated (Hutinger & Swartz, 1980; Hutinger, 1981). The administration needs to assign an administrator or staff member to coordinate the transition process. (Haines, et al., 1985; Hanline & Knowlton, 1988; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980).

The assigned administrator would coordinate with staff the following components: a) prioritize the process of transition as an important component of the ECSE program (Hutinger & Swartz, 1980: McLoughlin & Kershman, 1979), b) establish individual transition plans for each student (Brown, Pumpian, Baumgart, Vandeventer, Ford, Schroeder, & Gruenwald, 1981; Fowler, 1982), c) provide for consistent

and adequate follow-up of students (Coonrod, 1980; Fowler, 1982; Haines, et al., 1985; Hutinger, 1981; Maddox & Edgar, 1985), d) provide parents and sending teachers some choices among classrooms when placing students in the next environment (Forness, 1977; Haines, et al., 1985), and e) develop procedures for on-going communication with parents (Coonrod, 1980; Fowler, 1982; Hains, et al., 1985; Johnson et al., 1986; Sanford & Mathers, 1988) which would include opportunities for parents to have informal contacts with staff (Hutinger & Swartz, 1981).

The administrator would also facilitate the scheduling of meetings for parent/s regarding transition to the next environment (Fowler, 1982; Haines, et al., 1985; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980; Johnson, et al., 1986; Maddox & Edgar, 1985; Sanford & Mathers, 1988; Turnbull & Blacher-Dixon, 1981; Winton, Turnbull, & Blacher, 1984). Visitation to the receiving environment would be arranged for student and parent(s) (Fowler, 1982; Haines, et al., 1985; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980). These visits should occur in the fall so parents would have the opportunity to observe students who had just begun their kindergarten experience. Activities and teacher expectations would be similar to when their child would enter the new environment.

The administrator would work with staff to develop an evaluation procedure which would measure the effectiveness of the transition process and provide recommendations for revision. This individual would be responsible for

facilitating the evaluation procedures (Haines, et al., 1985; Haines, Fowler, & Chandler, 1988; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980). The administrator would designate the support staff who would work with students prior to the placement of students in the new environment (Bricker & Sandall, 1979; Fowler, 1982; Meisels, 1977), and would develop a process for sending student files to receiving staff prior to students' placement (Haines, et al., 1985; Johnson, et al., 1986; Edgar & Maddox, 1985). Again, this would give the receiving teacher an opportunity to prepare for the new student.

It's important that the administrator provides appropriate inservice training for the receiving staff prior to the placement of students, and continue inservice training throughout the year as it's needed (Bricker & Sandall, 1979; Ganshow, Weber, & Davis, 1984; Gerlock, 1985; Haines, et al., 1985; Hutinger & Swartz, 1980; Karnes, 1977; Meisels, 1977; McLoughlin & Kershman, 1979; Simon & Gillman, 1979; Turnbull & Schultz, 1979; Winton, 1986).

The importance of providing appropriate inservice training for staff is emphasized throughout the literature (Bricker & Sandall, 1979; Grenot-Scheyer & Falvey, 1986; Jamieson, 1984; Johnson & Cartwright, 1979; Stephens & Braun, 1980). Many mainstream staff members have asked for inservice training to help them be better prepared to work with this special population (Hutinger & Swartz, 1980). Yet, teachers and administrators report that inservice

training in many school districts is inadequate (Blaska, 1989). Grenot-Scheyer and Falvey (1986) have indicated that attitudinal barriers among mainstream staff often exist as a result of lack of information or "fear of the unknown." In order to integrate students with special needs effectively, appropriate staff training needs to be addressed (McLean & Hanline, 1990).

Insert Table 3 about here

Timeline for Implementation. A timeline for implementing the transition process is needed in order to help ensure that the practices will be implemented. It should be noted that while many transition practices occur in the spring of the year, transition is not a "May event." Many of the transition practices outlined in this model should be occurring throughout the academic year.

Figure 1 illustrates a suggested timeline for implementation of the transition practices in the SRA Transition Model for the academic year prior to the move. Figure 2 depicts the timeline for the follow-up practices which begin the academic year following the move for this same group of students. Figure 3 is a comprehensive timeline which illustrates the follow-up practices that begin in the fall for one group of students and the new

cycle of transition practices which begins again in the fall for a new group of students.

Insert Figures 1,2, & 3 about here

In the fall, sending teachers begin to implement the transition process for students who will move out the following year, and at the same time these teachers implement follow-up practices for students who have just moved into kindergarten. Meanwhile, the receiving teachers implement practices for this group of students who has just moved into their kindergaten programs. Tables 1 and 2 provide listings of the practices for sending and receiving teachers which are incorporated into and illustrated in the timeline.

Throughout this model administrators are responsible for practices that are instrumental in making the transtiion process work. In the fall, the administration must assign and provide time for an administrator or teacher to be responsible for coordinating the transition process. In the winter, this person must arrange for parent meetings regarding the transition process. In the spring, support staff must be designated for receiving teachers, files sent, and inservice training provided. The following fall (or continued longer if needed) this inservice training should

continue. Throughout the entire process, this person must coordinate the transition process, ensuring that sending and receiving staff are implementing appropriate transition practices throughout the year as indicated by the timeline on the SRA Transition Model. It is also important that the administrator provide appropriate support and reinforcement to sending and receiving staff throughout the process.

Evaluation should be conducted in December. This evaluation should examine the entire transition process for one group of students, which would include practices for one academic year and the follow-up practices occurring the following year up to, approximately, December. Parents, sending teachers, receiving teachers, and the administrator should be involved in this evaluation process. The findings from this evaluation should result in making appropriate changes and adjustments in the current set of practices which make up the transition process.

The timeline in the SRA Transition Model is based on a nine month school calendar with students moving from early childhood special education programs into kindergarten in September. In schools where programs are operational throughout the calendar year, the timeline could be adjusted to reflect a calendar year program with students moving at other times.

It is recommended that early childhood special education and kindergarten programs adopt a comprehensive transition process, such as the SRA Transition Model, to

ensure that appropriate transition practices are implemented within an effective timeline, by staff who are well trained and clearly understand their roles and the expected student outcomes. This model does not support the pholosophy that students must meet a particular set of criteria or wait to enter kindergarten. On the contrary, the SRA Transition Model supports having children work toward learning developmentally appropriate skills needed in kindergarten, helping students develop as much as each is capable, and continue this learning process upon entering kindergarten.

It is only through the implementation of an appropriate transiton process that professionals and parents can increase the probability of succcess for young children with special needs as they move into the next environment and become integrated with their peers.

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Table 1

S R A Transition Model
(Senders, Receivers, Administrators

SENDERS - PRACTICES

1. Visits the receiving environment:
   - identifies the differences between programs
     * staff/student ratio
     * teacher attention and reinforcement
     * physical arrangement
     * daily schedule
     * classroom rules and routines
     * self-help skills
     * academic skills
     * support systems
   - determines the skills required of receiving environment
     * survival skills

2. Incorporates into IEP objectives appropriate for transition:
   - places student in integrated setting prior to transition as is appropriate

3. Communicates with parent/s about transition:
   - provides opportunities for parent/s to have informal contacts and communication with staff
   - encourages child and parent/s to regard positively the new environment, personnel, etc.

4. Prepares student for transition:
   - gradually changes environment, teaching methods and expectations throughout the year so by spring they become similar to the receiving environment:
     * reduces reinforcement
     * reduces teacher instruction, prompts, and cues
     * introduces more group work
     * increases student's responsibility for self and belongings
     * changes methods of in-class transitions
     * introduces classroom rules
     * utilizes specific strategies to promote generalization

5. Communicates with receiving teacher prior to placement of students:
   - meets with receiving teacher to plan practices to be utilized during the transition process

6. Conducts year-end staffing including receiving teacher

7. Conducts follow-up communication with receiving teacher:
   - during first month of placement and remaining months

Table 2

S R A Transition Model
(Senders, Receivers, Administrators)

RECEIVERS - PRACTICES
1. Visits the sending environment: - identify differences between programs * expectations * strategies * curricula - communicates with sending teacher
2. Attends IEP staffing prior to placement of student
3. Meets student and parent/s prior to placement
4. Familiarizes self regarding the handicapping condition and education implications, and the available support services
5. Develops appropriate programming for student: - makes accommodations in the receiving environment to facilitate the student's adjustment - incorporates strategies previously determined to be appropriate (i.e., behavior management and teaching strategies)
6. Communicates and works effectively with parent/s: - establishes on-going communication with parent/s - provides opportunities for parent/s to have informal contacts and communication with staff
7. Follow-up communication with sending teacher

Table 3

S R A Transition Model
(Senders, Receivers, Administrators)

ADMINISTRATIVE - PRACTICES

1. Assigns administrator or staff to coordinate transition:
   - prioritizes transition as an important program component
   - establishes a transition process
     * establishes an individualized transition plan for each student, or clearly identifies transition objectives on IEP
     * provides adequate and consistent follow-up
     * provides parent/s and staff some options as to which receiving program the student will attend
   - provides opportunities for formal and informal interactions and communication between sending and receiving teachers

2. Provides meetings for parent/s regarding transition to the next environment

3. Arranges visitation to receiving environment for student and parent/s

4. Develops and implements an evaluation procedure:
   - includes the sending and receiving teachers, administrator, and parent/s

5. Designates support staff prior to placement.

6. Sends student's file to receiving teacher prior to placement

7. Provides appropriate training to staff:
   - provides inservice training for receiving staff prior to placement of student and during the year, as appropriate

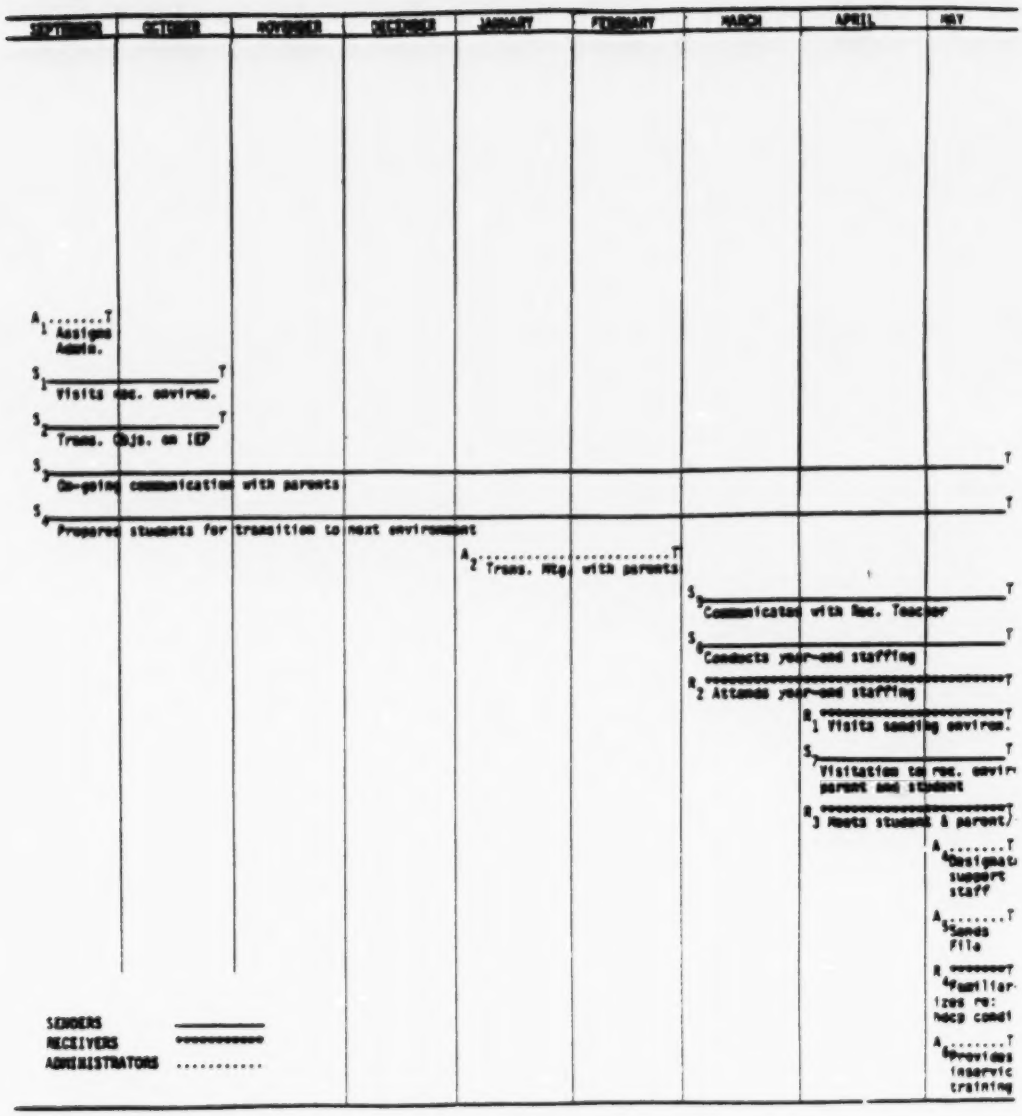

Figure 1. Practices implemented year prior to transition

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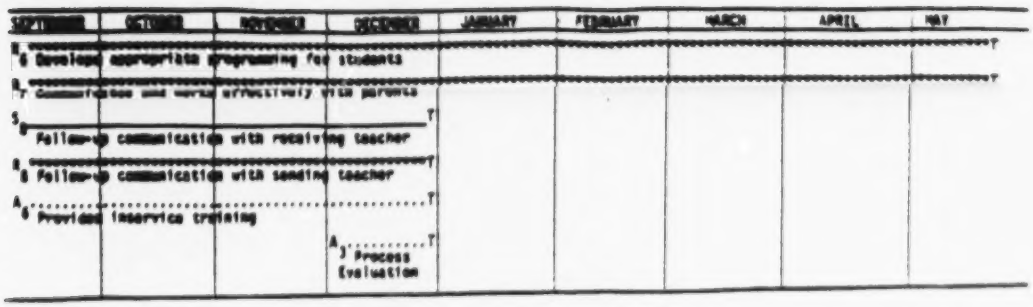

Figure 2. Practices implemented as follow-up

SENDERS _____
RECEIVERS **********
ADMINISTRATORS .....

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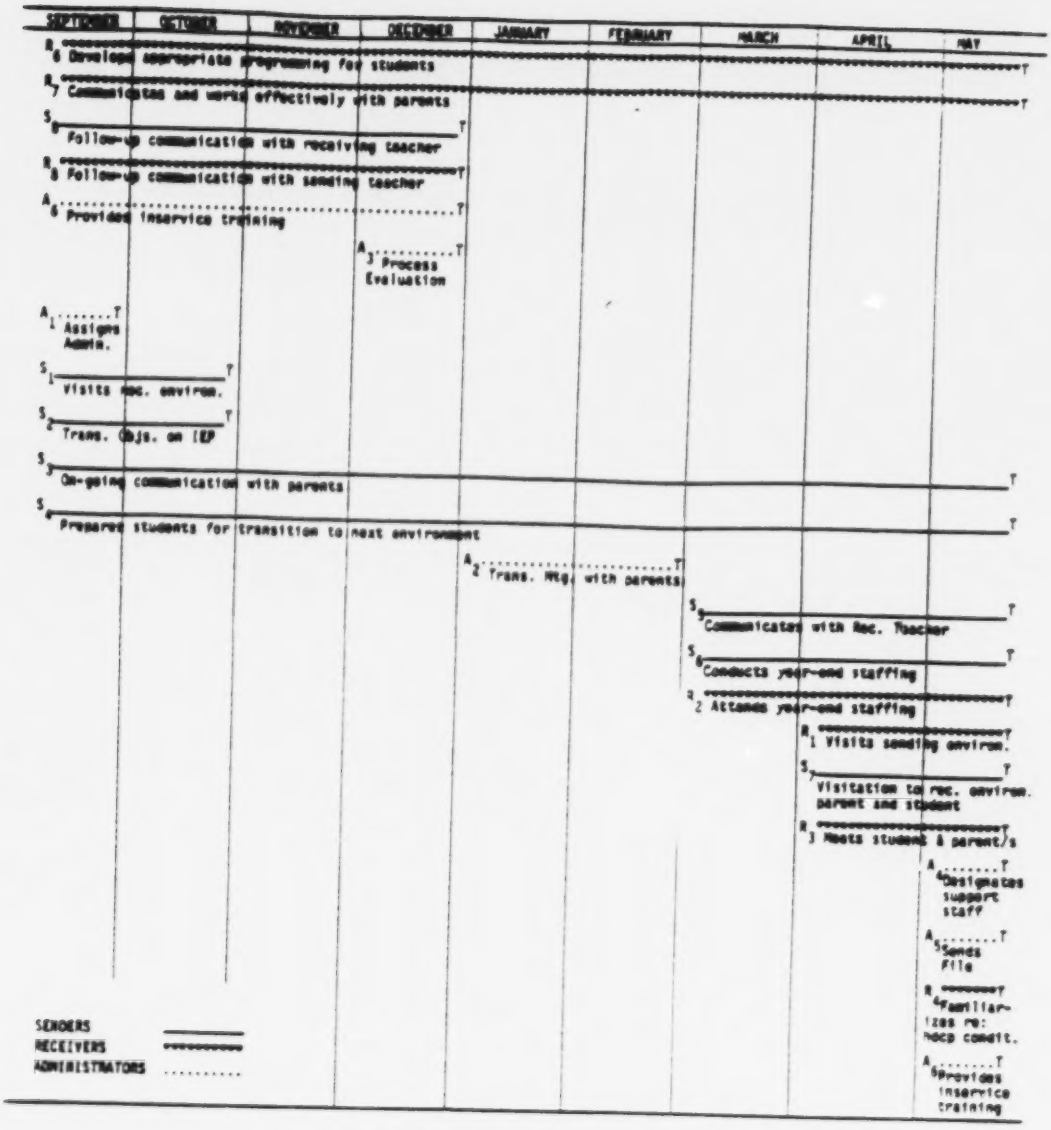

S R A transition model

Figure 3. Comprehensive transition process

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